

(DID NOT PASS)

### **Community Council 2016-2017 Recommendation**

To the members of Senior Leadership Group,  
To chairs of academic departments,

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, 2017, the Community Council passed a recommendation noting the severely negative community impact of bringing Charles Murray to campus. Murray's hateful rhetoric was especially ill-placed in the new political environment that has forced students and marginalized groups into activism unseen since the 1960s. Supremacy is a very real threat felt even more intimately now by much of the community. The Council's recommendation recognized this, and advocated for President Patton to not deliver remarks at the beginning of the event as well as for Political Science to rescind its co-sponsorship of the event. Both the President's and the department's actions were understood by the body as legitimating hate speech as intellectual discourse. In spite of Community Council's recommendation, neither the President nor the department distanced themselves from the event.

The Charles Murray incident proceeded to devolve into a community disaster. One faculty member was injured, and the national media has systematically sought to dismantle the college's great reputation. Faculty and staff have been forced to choose sides of a yawning division tearing through the community. Bill Burger and Public Safety are under deep suspicion by the student body for implication in violence against student organizers. Because of their respective involvements, the President and the department have both cast doubt on their own commitment to the well-being of marginalized members of our community.

In evaluating the fallout, three themes have emerged. While Charles Murray is certainly a catalyst for the conversation, Community Council believes the incident on March 2<sup>nd</sup> exposed deep flaws in the College's system that must be addressed. A lack of institutional memory of activism prevented the College from having necessary mechanisms for safe and civic discourse in place. Academic departments do not contain established channels through which students can influence departmental decisions, which ensured a feeling of helplessness among students within the Political Science department that sought to register dissent and be heard in discussions of reform in the department's co-sponsorship decision. More generally, there is no established channel through which voices can register dissent and influence college decisions to welcome speakers.

**Therefore, Community Council recommends that Middlebury College and each academic department create an appeals process through which students can voice their dissent of speakers, forums, and public events, as well as be heard in conversations on potential changes to be undertaken in the interest of community.**

(DID NOT PASS)

**1) Academic Departments:**

- **Announcement to all department majors of any controversial speakers at least one month in advance**
- **Student Advisory Committee (SAC) given a new responsibility to call for meeting with the department chair at the SAC's discretion to discuss the merit of any sponsorship**
- **Department Chair mandatorily consult with SAC and a Community Council representative when making any decision to sponsor a controversial speaker**
- **Willingness to schedule counter-programming or rescind sponsorship if SAC suspects a negative community impact resulting from the event.**

**2) College:**

- **Provide the Vice President for Student Affairs a new responsibility of receiving requests for review of any decision for a speaker to be brought to campus**
- **The Vice President for Student Affairs include requests for review in Community Council agenda for the body to act as jury, evaluating the request for review on the basis of community standards**
- **In each review session, a case from each party involved (including reasoning for and against the speaker presenting in the proposed format) be provided**
- **Creation of possible resolutions to the problem, including retraction of invitation for the speaker to speak on campus, counter-programming, and adjustment of institutional weight given to a speaker's platform**

**Respectfully submitted by Community Council on March 21, 2017.**